

People and places: Bridging the information gaps in refugee integration

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Abstract

This article discusses the sources of information used by refugees as they navigate integration systems and processes. The study used interviews to examine how refugees and asylum seekers dealt with their information needs, finding that information gaps were bridged through people and places. People included friends, solicitors, and caseworkers, whereas places included service providers, detention centers, and refugee camps. The information needs matrix was used as an analytical tool to examine the operation of sources on refugees' integration journeys. Our findings expand understandings of information sources and information grounds. The matrix can be used to enhance host societies' capacity to make appropriate information available and to provide evidence for the implementation of the information needs matrix.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Refugee integration is a two-way adjustment, with both the refugee and host society making adaptations. It is a complex and gradual process with numerous dimensions and one that imposes considerable demands on both the individual and the receiving society. The rules around refuge seeking and governmental processes are liable to regular changes; consequently, refugee integration remains complicated for both refugees and society (UNHCR, 2018). The complexity of refugee integration has been attributed to an information vacuum for both refugees and host societies. Robinson (2010) stated that an information vacuum in host societies created disbelief and myth in public opinion toward refugees, thus preventing their integration. Phillimore (2013) also noted that inaccessible information prevents refugees from successfully living in accommodations. Lucchino, Rosazza-Bondibene, and Portes (2012) highlighted the need for information support at the early stages of integration. The unavailability and inaccessibility of

information in host societies consistently inhibit refugee integration.

Oduntan's (2018) information behavior investigation into refugee integration linked refugees' information needs to gaps in host society provisions and uncovered inequality in access to information, as depicted in Figure 1. The information needs matrix indicates how refugees navigated integration systems and the needs that arose during their integration journey. The study showed that there were information gaps in "access to" and "delivery of" integration provision. In addition, a "*survival of the informed*" was evident, where possession of information was the trait that enabled refugees to progress on their integration journeys (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019). The information needs matrix addresses which information needs occur on the integration journey; however, the sources are not explicit. How to ensure availability of information and the applicability of information sources on the integration journey is not established. In this article, we address the following question: What are the information sources for navigating

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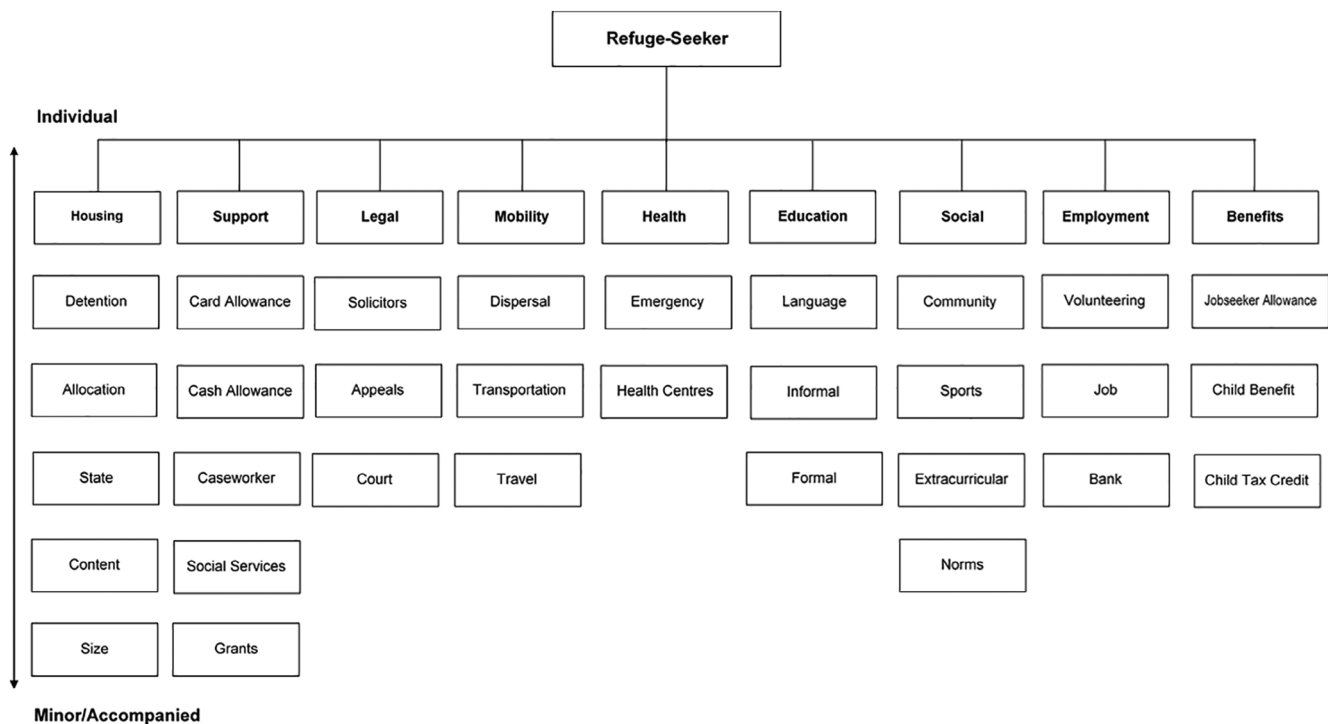


FIGURE 1 The information needs matrix

integration processes and systems? This understanding will aid host societies' ability to make consistent information available, thereby increasing refugee's ability to obtain critical information for their integration and easing the operation of refugee integration processes and systems in host societies.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Information sources are discussed alongside information needs in information behavior studies (Wilson, 2016; Bates, 2010). Such studies often produce new concepts in addition to resulting in deeper understanding of research outcomes (Fisher, Erdelez, & McKechnie, 2005). Bawden (2006) opined that the resultant concepts are complementary to explore phenomena. Fisher and Julien (2009) pointed out that this could be a strength, as the results deliver practical outcomes for improving systems. A relevant concept to this information behavior study is Fisher's concept of information ground(s), proposed as "synergistic environment(s) temporarily created when people come together for a singular purpose but from whose behavior emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of information" (Pettigrew, 1999). Exploring information grounds as part of understanding the sources of information in refugee integration will further enhance host

societies' ability to make integration information available for all. The concept of information grounds has been expounded in numerous contexts, including Loudon, Buchanan, and Ruthven's (2016) importance of social support groups for first-time mothers, Bronstein's (2017) benefits of social connections for domestic migrants, Cisek, Korycińska, and Krakowska's (2018) first-year students awareness of information grounds, and Counts and Fisher's (2010) information grounds in digital technology age. Information grounds identified include ballparks, bike shops, friends, churches, schools, workplaces, medical clinics, hair salons, barber shops, day-care centers, garages, book shops, and social service organizations, including radio stations, libraries (Fisher, Durrance, & Hinton, 2004; Fisher, Marcoux, Miller, Sánchez, & Cunningham, 2004; Lorenz, Kubalíková, Wölfelová, Vozárová, & Habartová, 2018), university campus disability centers (Williams & Smith, 2016), and English as a second or other language (ESOL) classes (Elmore, 2017).

2.1 | Information sources in migration contexts

Migration information studies highlight how migrants find information and their preferred sources (Caidi, Allard, & Quirke, 2010). Caidi, Allard, and Dechief (2008) divided the information sources of general migrants into

four groups: social networks, formal sources, information and communication technology, and ethnic media. Formal sources, for instance, included settlement agencies, government departments, community centers, ethnocultural organizations, libraries, and other service providers. Khoir, Du, and Koronios (2015) described sources as incorporating social media, interpersonal sources (family and friends), mass media, and formal organizations such as libraries and government offices. In addition, information grounds described included churches, community centers, and playgrounds. Lingel (2014) found that the use of social media and digital devices was pertinent for immigrants living in the city. Recently, Beretta, Sayyad Abdi, and Bruce (2018) asserted that information sources in immigrant studies included social networks (family and friends), the Internet, teachers, settlement workers, traditional media, libraries, religious centers, community centers, and government departments and agencies.

The information sources used by the forced displaced exist along similar lines as general migrants and include churches, faith-based groups, sporting teams, social media, service provider personnel, health services, and libraries (Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016). Similarly, family and friends, mosques, churches, government departments, television and radio programs, and some printed sources such as books and newspapers also fall under this banner (Mansour, 2018). Lloyd, Pilerot, and Hultgren (2017) observed a high reliance on digital and social media for information and noted friends, language classes, and others experiences. Shankar et al. (2016) found a preference for social networks with peers and professionals among refugee students. Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, and Qayyum (2013) noted caseworkers to be a valuable source and observed reducing reliance on them as refugees progressed through three phases of settlement—transitioning, settling in, and being settled. Quirke (2015) highlighted the potential of leisure settings as hubs of useful settlement information for refugees and immigrants. Martzoukou and Burnett (2017) indicated the use of interpersonal sources in the information literacy practices of Syrian refugees in Scotland. Le Louvier and Innocenti (2019), along similar lines, found social networks to be the main sources of information for asylum seekers and refugees in England.

The information sources outlined are consistent, but none encapsulates the integration journey created by host society integration processes and systems. They have created instead understandings of individual practices. Refugee integration processes and systems are not straightforward, and the use of information sources to meet integration needs involves social interactions at different levels and places on the integration journey

(Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017). The extent to which current knowledge of information sources can help refugees navigate these complex integration processes and systems is not clear. Johnson (2009) advised that a broader view of our social world in human information behavior research could lead to richer policy implications for the field. Oduntan's (2018) study created an understanding that benefits both refugees and host societies in experiencing, designing, and delivering integration provisions, as well as, expanding our understanding of information sources and information behavior in complex contexts. Oduntan and Ruthven (2019) discussed the distinct information needs of different categories of people seeking protection (refugee, refused asylum seeker, and asylum seeker), unified with the term *refuge-seeker*. In this article, we examine information sources for meeting integration needs in light of the information needs matrix and address the following question: What are the information sources used on the integration journey?

3 | RESEARCH DESIGN

The study explored refugee-seekers' experiences of navigating integration systems in the United Kingdom to understand information behavior in refugee integration. The method used was underpinned by a sense-making methodology (Dervin, 2005). Our study specifically sought to identify people-centered information needs and information sources from actions and interactions within the host society's integration processes and systems. Sense-making methodology focuses on processes and flow of events in human movement across time and space, enabled experiences of integration processes and systems to be covered in depth. The methodology uses a "*situation-gap-outcome*" metaphor to focus on where one is coming from, what one is struggling with and where one is going in terms of human experiences (Dervin and Foreman-Wernet, 2003). Using this metaphor, it was possible to record information properties as refugees interacted with integration processes and systems to find and bridge information gaps. Refugee integration was conceptualized as a sense-making journey—participants recounted experiences situationally and the information gaps and sources in the situations elicited. The detailed

TABLE 1 Study population

Status	Number of the participants
Refused asylum seekers	10
Asylum seekers	5
Refugees	5

TABLE 2 Arrival route

Route	Number of the participants
Road travel	7
Port of entry	4
In-country	6
Humanitarian or reunion	3

interview protocol is published in Oduntan and Ruthven (2019).

Table 1 shows the study population of 20 refugee-seekers. There were 11 female participants and nine male participants. Their ages ranged from 15 to 50 years. Two of the participants were minors (accompanied by parents) and five were part of families with young children. Two participants arrived as minors but at the time of interview were adults. Ten participants had elementary education and 10 had graduate-level education. Participants had lived for between 1 month and 15 years in the host society at the time of data collection between July and December 2016. The participants were recruited using diversity sampling to prevent the inclusion of only a specific group according to age or geography. The population geography spans 14 countries, including the top countries in the United Kingdom Home Office list of nationalities applying for asylum—Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Eritrea, Afghanistan, and Syria (Home Office, 2016). Furthermore, there was no one method of arrival into the integration system. Incorporation into the system happened by means of road travel, via ports of entry, using in-country routes, and humanitarian/family reunions.

Table 2 shows the arrival route distribution for this study population. The road travel route included those who traveled by road through countries and those who journeyed via the Mediterranean Sea. The port of entry route included those who traveled by air into the host country and applied for asylum at the airport. In-country routes were taken by those who had been in the country for other reasons and now could not go back to their home countries for fear of persecution. The humanitarian/family reunion route included those given protection status or visas from their home countries. There are two sides to this—either humanitarian, as a result of the government recruiting refugees from refugee camps and other places, or family reunion, a step taken by a refugee already in the host country inviting family members to join them. Refugee-seekers using the first three arrival routes start the integration journey as asylum seekers, whereas those taking the humanitarian/family reunion route start as refugees. The broad range of characteristics enabled a multidimensional exploration and analysis of

information needs and sources as refugee-seekers navigate the host society's integration processes.

Twenty semi-structured interviews were completed. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the first author. The average interview lasted 1 hr and 5 min. The findings from the first few interviews were used as further validation of the interview questions as the refugees had no problems with understanding the questions, and their accounts of their experiences provided appropriate data about their information sources. Data analysis was an iterative process of thematic coding. First, data were thematically analyzed, and emergent themes about information sources were sorted and labeled. Then, in a second-level analysis, the sources of information were coded into information need themes. The focus was on instances of information source occurrence to meet needs rather than instances of individual use, thereby increasing variability. This enabled identification of distinct sources of information for different needs by people and within different categories. In addition, the possibility of identifying how sources applied during navigation of integration systems increased.

4 | FINDINGS

Refuge-seekers meet their information needs relating to housing, legal, health, education, social, and employment support through direct personal interactions with people or indirect social interactions in places. The situational approach revealed information sources to be either intrinsic or extrinsic to the refugee-seekers' situation: intrinsic components are a necessary part of the situation, whereas extrinsic components are nonessential and variable parts of the situation. For example, solicitors are intrinsic to the situation of preparing an asylum appeal, whereas community centers are extrinsic to this situation. Both, however, can be used to provide help in meeting information needs. The data showed that information sources depended on the contextual and demographic attributes of the refugee-seeker on the integration journey. For instance, a refused asylum seeker received information from Dungavel detention center, whereas an asylum seeker or refugee received information from the Scottish Refugee Council, a major Scottish charity for refugees. A minor (child) refugee-seeker received information from a teacher, whereas an accompanied person received information from caseworkers. Similarly, those who arrived via the road route received information from detention and refugee camps, whereas those who arrived via the family reunion route received information from the Red Cross—the dedicated organization for refugee family reunion.



FIGURE 2 Information sources [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 2 shows the frequency distribution of sources of information in our study population, based on the number of times each source was used to fill information gaps during integration. Information gaps were more commonly filled through friends, solicitors, Scottish Refugee Council, community centers, the Red Cross, and family members. The data show that refugee-seekers received different information from specific people and places at various points on the integration journey, highlighting the importance of the frequency of sources to meet information needs. For instance, an asylum seeker who arrived via the road route acquired certain information while at the refugee camp, then, when granted refugee status bridged the information gap through, for example, caseworkers and the Scottish Refugee Council. On the other hand, if their asylum application was not granted, the refused asylum seeker's journey would include a detention center (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017). The ability of refugee-seekers to meet information needs at detention centers turns the center into an information source for refugee integration. In the following sections, we present information sources and uses and explain the operation of these sources on the matrix journey. Quotes spoken directly by participants are presented to illustrate themes.

5 | PEOPLE

The data show that refugee-seekers filled information gaps through personal interactions with individuals intrinsic to their conditions on their integration journeys. This occurred through formal and informal interactions. Formal sources were defined through host society provisions

TABLE 3 People as information sources

People	Instances of use
Caseworker	15
Family	20
Friends	50
Interpreter	10
Media	10
People	30
Social worker	10
Solicitor	40
Teacher	20

of professionals such as solicitors, caseworkers, social workers, and interpreters to support refugee integration. Meanwhile, informal sources were defined by relationships with friends, family, and media.

The data show that informal sources were predominant over formal sources (Table 3). However, it is notable that key information sources included professionals provided by the host society—notably, the use of solicitors to fill information gaps, which can be attributed to the high number of refused asylum seekers in the study population. This highlights the dual roles played by professionals working in refugee integration and their need to be equipped with information. Although informal sources are predominant and consistent with previous studies, the specific use of family to fill information gaps is uncommon in this study population. In terms of navigating unfamiliar processes and systems, friends and family were not blood relations, but people encountered on refugees' journeys who became close ties. In the next section, we describe refugee-seekers filling information gaps using people as formal and informal sources of information.

5.1 | Formal sources

Formal sources stemmed from professional and support workers' interactions. Support workers were provided in host countries to support the integration of refugee-seekers in different capacities. For refused asylum seekers, they include solicitors, whereas for nonnative English speakers, they include interpreters, and for refugee-seekers with families or minors or special needs, they include social workers. For all refugee-seekers, caseworkers were important. Teachers were not integration support workers, but, as they are part of society's processes—that is, schools, they are included here.

“This job my teacher mentioned it and said John Lewis [a major UK department store] are always recruiting, why don't you apply there. So, I got myself a part-time job on Sundays beside my home and that job is with me till now.” 14-year refugee

Teachers were also strategic information providers for refugee-seekers' education and employment. The role of teachers was consistent for older refugee-seekers in the integration system.

“I got a placement to GSK [a multinational pharmaceutical company] for a lot of students. And I did this with the support from my teacher and friends. Teachers and fellow students were key people for me; they became my support network.” 16-year refugee

Solicitors, in addition to providing legal representation for refused asylum seekers, represented an important source of information for those who had been in detention. Solicitors provided information on how to access financial support needs to prevent refused asylum seekers from becoming destitute. Solicitors also served as signposters to service providers, charities, and humanitarian organizations. However, solicitors' provision of information was not consistent for the participants—some participants stated that they did not receive information from solicitors.

“After one month, I went to the lawyer and told him about everything and he said they will do what I want. After one month of homelessness, they gave me a house and azure card.” 2.5-year refused asylum seeker

Interpreters were important sources of information for non-English speakers. In our study, the data showed that interpreters had a significant effect on choice of solicitors for non-English speakers. This brings to light the additional role of interpreters as information providers. Social workers were also important sources of information, particularly for those with special needs. A participant with mental health problems highlighted the importance of their social worker in their integration. The social worker's role is not only to provide practical solutions to problems but to be a custodian of information for those with special needs. Social workers therefore need to be equipped to perform this additional role.

“The second day we got there, there was an interpreter guy there. He said hi and he said he has a solicitor where he is working, and he invited us. The interpreter is downstairs at the reception place. He took us by his car the next day to solicitor's office, so we register. I trust to go with him because he can speak my language.” 4-year refused asylum seeker

Caseworkers were a critical source of information for all types of refugee-seekers. They provided general information for living in the host society, and participants emphasized how helpful the caseworkers were in their integration. The data also show that caseworkers played intermediary roles in refugee-seekers' navigation of integration processes, providing information about social living, education, health, and employment.

“Through my caseworker I have an independent caseworker who comes to show me around, register you with Scottish Power when I moved to the house. It is a charity; they help you when you move to the new house. The guy applied for me to get welfare for accommodation equipment. After two to three weeks they put carpet, washing machines and different kitchen stuff. The caseworker facilitates that.” 3-year refugee

However, the data show that professionals' ability to provide information was not consistent. This suggests a lack of awareness of refugee-seekers' needs and lack of publicly available information, or perhaps refugee-seekers not asking for information. This implies that professionals need to be better equipped to perform their roles.

5.2 | Informal sources

Informal sources of information were from relationships developed on refugees' integration journeys. Words such as people, someone, and friends and family were used to describe these sources. They formed channels through which information needs in relation to legal assistance, employment, and education were met. In this study, friends were synonymous with word-of-mouth information sharing. They served as providers of domain knowledge for navigating systems.

“I knew about the job centre through my step-mum. She works as an interpreter. They send her to work at different places and she

saw an advert for recruitment. She sent me there. Within the same day I got a job.”
14-year refugee

Family was friends who had traveled together and ended up in the same country. Friends not only provided information but also played intermediary roles. Their experiences provided information and directions for other refugee-seekers' integration journey. This highlights how information sources depended on both the arrival route into the country and situations faced. For example, excerpts from an interview with a refused asylum seeker of 11 years are set out here:

“They send me to [the] Sudanese embassy, so I refuse to talk to anybody at the Sudanese embassy because if you do they send you back to Africa the next morning. African leaders do not care about others just self. If you talk one word, they send you to Africa. They have taken me to the embassy seven times now, and I say nothing so for one hour we wait, and then we go back.”

Researcher: Why didn't you say anything?

Participant: “Because all my friends who go there and say something are all in Sudan now.”

For those who arrived by means of family reunion and humanitarian routes, the data also show that family members, such as spouses and parents, were their main sources of information. Furthermore, refugee-seekers arguably considered friends as close family. The data show that family were not necessarily relatives, but represented relationships developed on the integration journey that became close ties. Refugee-seekers from non-English-speaking countries highlighted that family comprised relationships with people from similar cultures who understood their language. However, family and friends alone appeared insufficient to provide all information.

“They give you options to call a lawyer. They gave me a paper to call the lawyer, but they did not tell me what to call the lawyer for. But someone told me, a guy from Lebanon he helped me there.”

Researcher: Is he staff?

Participant: “No he is a prisoner.” 2.5-year refused asylum seeker.

It is evident that people are intrinsic to refugee-seekers' situations, including family, friends, and professionals,

TABLE 4 Places as information sources

Places	Instances of use
Charities	30
Churches	10
Community centers	30
Detention centers	10
Mosques	10
Red Cross	25
Refugee camps	20
Scottish Refugee Council	30
Schools	10

and their importance for navigating integration systems cannot be overemphasized. However, these people are not sufficiently informed to fill gaps. It is necessary for information to be made consistent and available in the host society to enable all members of society to operate uniformly and enhance the integration experiences of refugee-seekers. It is thus important to ensure that these people are equipped with adequate and appropriate information to help refugee-seekers meet their needs. The absence of consistent information from sources makes integration harder for all refugee-seekers.

6 | PLACES

Refuge-seekers filled information gaps through social interactions in public institutions such as refugee councils, charities, schools, community centers, detention centers, and religious centers. These venues of social interactions were extrinsic to individual situations, but information gaps were addressed. The nature of these sources makes them akin to Fisher's information grounds, described as places for other activities where information needs are met (Fisher & Naumer, 2006). Our data show that such information grounds can be either designated or undesignated, and refugee-seekers deliberately find or encounter information in these places. We describe them as designated and undesignated information grounds.

The data show that the most common information grounds for this population sample were charities and community centers (Table 4). However, the ability to meet information needs was generally consistent across places. For instance, the Scottish Refugee Council is designed to practically support refugee integration, and the support provided includes information. The Scottish Refugee Council is an information source for any refugee-

seeker upon arrival into the host society. Similarly, refugee camps are designed to temporarily accommodate the forced displaced, but refugee-seekers obtained information through social interactions within the camp. This represents a source for those who have journeyed through the road route. In the following sections, we describe how refugee-seekers filled information gaps using designated and undesignated information grounds.

6.1 | Designated information grounds

Designated information grounds are refugee-specific places created by host societies to actively support refugee integration. They include specified organizations that administer host society provisions for integration. The United Kingdom's provisions are administered through service providers, such as humanitarian organizations and local charities. In Glasgow, Scotland, the place of this study, such organizations included the Scottish Refugee Council, the British Red Cross, and the Unity Centre. The data show that their roles were integral to successful navigation of the integration system and refugee-seekers justified the significance of these service providers for their integration.

Researcher: If you have a problem, who do you talk to?

Participant: "Refugee council."

Researcher: Not friends?

Participant: "No. What will they do for you? Refugee council give you everything. And Red Cross, they help you. The refugee council are very important." 4-year refused asylum seeker.

Service providers give information across all areas of needs. This includes information on housing, mobility, and education. However, available information about these organizations is arguably insufficient, and inconsistencies were apparent in the service provided.

"The Red Cross gave us a list of places where we can get free clothes and food, but the problem was the transport to go to these places. In the Red Cross they told us about getting Halal meat every Sunday. Then she asked who is your solicitor and I told her we have a solicitor in London and she said to us, a solicitor from London cannot practise law in Scotland and my mum said we don't have more money to pay the solicitor and she said it was free." 18-month refused asylum seeker

Local charities were also part of the host society's locally provided integration support, including food banks. However, they are privately funded, meaning that their ability to support refugee-seekers depends on availability of funds. The data show that local charities were particularly important for refused asylum seekers with limited provisions and support. The main local charity for refused asylum seekers in this study population was the Unity Centre.

"Nobody supported me when I was homeless. I went to Scottish Refugee Council and told them I am homeless and they told me its lunch time. It was Unity that helped me."
2.5-year refused asylum seeker

Community centers were similarly funded to give practical support with basic living needs including food and toiletries. The data show that community centers were places where different kinds of information were acquired, and social relationships built. Community centers and integration networks were particularly important to refugee-seekers with families.

"Community like this town head village hall, help with everything even little things as where to buy things. When they (refugee-seekers) see people from their country, they feel a certain connection. Community plays a huge part in welcoming minor and families." 14-year refugee

In addition, schools were identified as places where information was acquired. Schools are fundamentally institutional places of learning via study experience or instruction. For this reason, ESOL classes were considered as school in this study. The data show that schools were especially important for minors, as they were places to acquire information in addition to skills. Their functions were similar to those of service providers and community centers.

"The school was very supportive. It all happened in school. The kids walk with you in the street and made it awkward for the older ones to abuse you on the street. I think it all started/happened in school. The school environment was safer. We sang in our language, I think it broke down the barriers. Because during practice we had to interact. What happened in the school trickled down into the community." 16-year refugee

However, as with service providers, information was inadequate for schools to function as information providers. Given the possibility of acquiring information from these institutional places, a need exists to enhance their capacity to offer information in addition to their primary roles.

6.2 | Undesignated information grounds

Undesignated information grounds were non-refugee-specific places where information was encountered on the integration journey. The data show that refuge-seekers attend such places for other purposes including leisure, but they receive information that helps their integration journeys. Such places include religious centers—mosques and churches—refugee camps, detention centers, and playgrounds. Religious centers offered provisions and appeared to double as community centers, providing practical support and information to refuge-seekers. Religious centers were arguably critical resources for families during integration. The data show that religious centers provide emotional support, particularly for the accompanied—that is, families with or without children.

“We had emotional problem, we did not have anyone to come visit us. We did not deal with Scottish Refugee Council and Red Cross. Some people came from changing religion and they were friendly and because we were lonely we like them to come and visit us and they visit us weekly even though we were Muslims.” 3-year refused asylum seeker

However, it appears that religious centers or community centers are only helpful for partial, not holistic, integration. This implies a form of cultural integration that is tantamount to societal segregation as such; people might only be able to function as part of one specific culture, not in the whole society.

“It is an Ethiopian church not Scottish. It is only cultural. They don't help you to settle in Glasgow.” 7-month asylum seeker

Refugee camps emerged as the main information sharing ground for those who traveled via the road route. This concerned those who crossed the Mediterranean Sea and traveled across countries in Europe to arrive in the United Kingdom. In this study population, Calais, in France, was the most common refugee camp serving as a point of departure to the United Kingdom. Six of the

seven participants representing the road travel route in Table 2 departed from here.

“Some friend come and tell me we will go to a safe place and I followed them so we go to France. In France, then a dealer catch us and keep us in a jungle (the informal name for this camp in Calais) for eight days. No talking, nothing they just give you small food, after that these people count and put us in the truck and lock. I don't know where we go. They tell us to knock the door when the truck stop. It was very cold, freezing. After that the truck stop. We knock the door. There is many police, England police. I am happy when I saw the police. I said I am safe.” 11-month refused asylum seeker

The refugee camp was an information sharing ground for pre- or postarrival conditions in the destination society and prepared refuge-seekers for the integration journey. The data also show that information was received from other people's experiences. While this points to information sharing during refugee integration, it also highlights the likely state of a refuge-seeker on arrival in the society and emphasizes the need for appropriate information in host societies, supporting the forced displaced. Refugee camps also need to be equipped with adequate and appropriate information to support refuge-seekers on their journeys.

“I have never been on the truck, but I hear from people at the camp, what they say about the truck that one can die, but I never knew anything. So I went on the truck and I saw two spare tyres and I stand under there and hold, it was really dangerous. When I saw a security with dogs to search the truck, then I knew this is going out to England because they don't search the ones coming from England. I waited, thinking for myself how to do it and how I will do it. When he finished searching, I went there and jumped on the truck and I feel good that I did not pay.” 2.5-year refused asylum seeker

Similarly, detention centers served two purposes—first as temporary accommodation for those who arrived via the road route and second as deportation accommodation for those whose asylum applications have been rejected. For deportees, detention centers filled legal information needs, as previously highlighted in the informal sources. For the road route arrivals, detention

centers also proved to be sites where social information gaps were filled and provided inspiration to enable progress on their precarious journeys.

“I feel like if I had not gone to Dungavel, I wouldn’t have known I could apply for asylum. You see when in detention—Dungavel—I made some friends who said you can’t just go easy. So, I had to think about how long I have been here and the future, so I took the advice and applied.”
6-year refused asylum seeker

Leisure centers such as playgrounds also emerged as a place where information was encountered. This was common to those accompanied with children. The possibility of encountering information on the integration journey suggests the likelihood of receiving wrong information. Host societies need to be deliberate in raising awareness and making integration information publicly available and accessible, and a gap that can be addressed using the information needs matrix.

7 | DISCUSSION

The findings show how information gaps in refugee integration were bridged by means of people and places. Our analysis further reveals that refugee-seekers’ ability to meet their information needs depended on conditions and interactions that occur as integration systems are navigated. Information studies have generally found reliance on interpersonal information sources, both close and diffuse social networks (Agarwal, 2017). Likewise, refugee-specific studies have been consistent in observations of individual interpersonal sources (Le Louvier & Innocenti, 2019; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2017). Indeed, but much of this stem from interactions with processes and systems required of the forced displaced to integrate in host societies (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019). Separating individual information sources from integration processes, therefore, limits the extent of application of sources.

Refugee integration is operationalized in an all-inclusive system that cuts across social, legal, economic, and institutional needs. To navigate the system successfully, refugee-seekers engage in interactions at different levels and places in host societies. The findings highlight the intrinsic and extrinsic nature of these relationships on the information needs journey. Refugee-seekers interact and relate to build relationships and connectedness in societies, at the same time meeting their information needs, which highlights the importance of the

interactions. The process of building relationships and the trust associated with intrinsic sources of information highlights attributes of social capital that are beyond the scope of this study but can be investigated further. Within the scope of information behavior, the information grounds concept of unconventional places where information is shared and received (Fisher & Naumer, 2006) is expanded to include detention centers, refugee camps, and playgrounds. Meanwhile, places such as churches, mosques, schools, charities, and community groups are consistent in different contexts.

People and places as sources of information encapsulate the multiple interactions in refugee integration. The findings show that, on the integration journey, information sources are not a case of preferred sources (Beretta et al., 2018) but of accessible sources. In the transition from asylum seeker to refugee or refused asylum seeker, refugee-seekers rely on encounters (with people or in places) on their journeys to deal with gaps at each stage of need. This is especially evident in the broad description of family, which only meant blood relatives to those who arrived through the family reunion route. It can be argued that there is increasing flexibility for the refugee status to meet information needs, still individual experiences differ. Given the instability associated with integration processes and systems, the refugee-seeker integration journey is undefined. This highlights the need for a holistic information strategy that will enhance the consistent flow of appropriate information within the host society. This ensures access to information for all, not only refugee-seekers. In the following sections, we discuss the practical and theoretical implications of our findings.

7.1 | Practical implications: Bridging the information gap

As information sources are dependent on refugee-seekers’ situations, we have the opportunity to discuss the information needs matrix as a tool for information provision to the refugee-seekers and dissemination in the host society. Figure 3 portrays how information sources in the matrix were used to bridge information gaps in access to provisions. The use of information sources to meet integration needs progressed from places to people. This is unsurprising, as refugee-seekers arrive into unfamiliar environments, and must first build new relationships with people to operate in these environments. As the journey progresses, reliance changes from extrinsic information sources to intrinsic ones, and there is increasing reliance on people, intrinsic to the refugee-seekers situation. Bridging the information gap in light of the information needs matrix is thus a relational process. On the

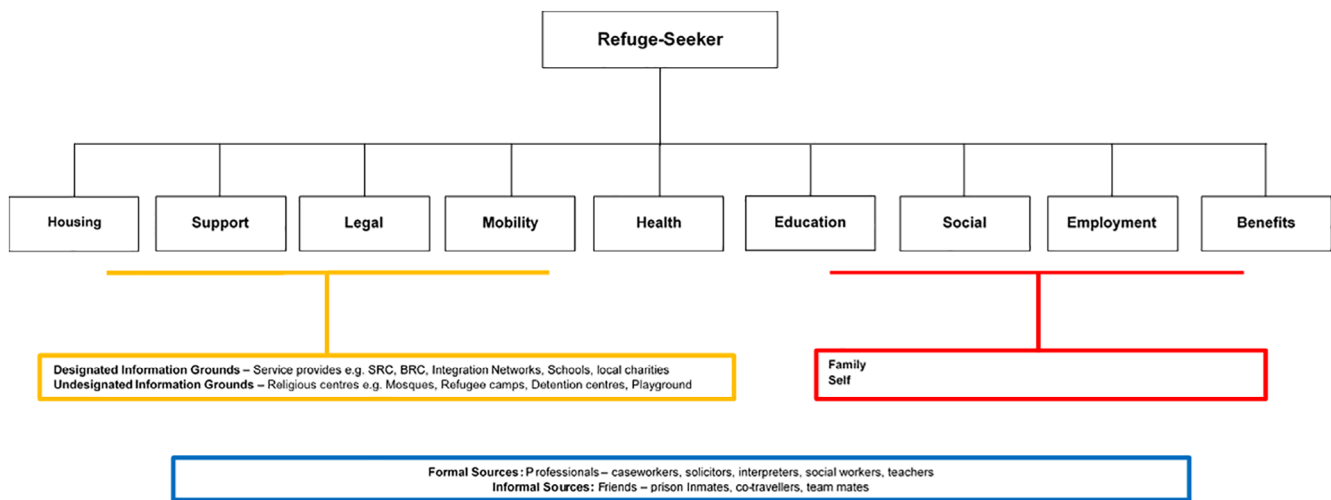


FIGURE 3 Bridging the information gaps in refugee integration [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

integration journey, appropriateness and reliability determine which information sources are used. For example, early stage needs such as housing, financial support, and welfare rights are met more frequently at information grounds including designated grounds such as the Scottish Refugee Council, British Red Cross, and undesignated grounds such as refugee camps and detention centers. As higher-level needs are approached, refugee-seekers are starting to rely more on themselves to obtain information. Throughout the integration journey people are encountered either as family, friends, or professionals who provide experiential information, and there is a simultaneous use of sources to bridge information gaps as refugee-seekers navigate the complex integration systems.

The ability to meet information needs begins in the information grounds (designated and undesignated), highlighted in yellow in Figure 3, followed by people (formal and informal), highlighted in blue, until self-reliance, highlighted in red. The exception is the few who arrive through the family reunion or humanitarian routes, who can begin with formal sources such as caseworkers and informal sources, including family members. Furthermore, there are referrals—people intrinsic to refugee-seekers' situations refer them to places and vice versa. Ultimately, information sources are intertwined—as refugee-seekers' journey through the stages of need and become more familiar with the processes and systems, their information need and reliance on extrinsic sources reduces. This means that the information needs matrix can be used in various situations to adequately equip the identified people to provide information to refugee-seekers. Solicitors can now be better equipped to provide information when they deliver legal services to refused

asylum seekers. Likewise, interpreters would be adequately equipped to give accurate information to non-English-speaking refugee-seekers. Social workers would be prepared for the additional function and able to help promote emotional balance. Caseworkers would be empowered in their roles as essential agents of refugee integration. In addition, the identified information grounds provide insights into an information dissemination strategy in the host society and direction toward support networks for the refugee-seekers. The matrix can be placed in service provider facilities, religious centers, charities, detention centers, and refugee camps among other places. Ultimately, information is made more publicly available, thereby reducing the chance of marginalization of refugees.

7.2 | Theoretical implications

Consistent information sources in migration context demonstrate that outcomes from different perspectives of information studies are complementary. Studies of individual practices show the sources of information as primary and secondary choices, whereas the inclusion of “who” and “where” in our information behavior study enlarges and expands the scope and relevance of information sources to the refugee-seekers' situations. However, the overall information sources described are restricted to this study population, which included 10 refused asylum seekers. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrate that situational approaches provide deeper contextual understanding of information needs and sources in any context. Sense-making situation-gap metaphors enable the separation of the who and where surrounding integration

information needs to reveal contextual information sources. Situations put any potential person into context, as there are often individual differences. The conceptual foundations of sense-making have been extensively dealt and established in empirical studies (Dervin and Foreman-Wernet, 2003). However, the nature and characteristics of situations as a unit of analysis for human information behavior are yet to be expounded. The increasing complexity of social problems presents an avenue for information studies to delve deeper into situations for nuanced descriptions.

Furthermore, information grounds have been expanded, but the emergence of detention centers and refugee camps calls for more information studies into these grounds. Emerging studies of refugee camps have focused on the use of technology (Fisher, Yefimova, & Yafi, 2016; Kaufmann, 2018) and social media (Dekker, Engbersen, Klaver, & Vonk, 2018). Although, general information studies point to online information (Khoir et al., 2015; Ruthven, 2019). However, there are issues surrounding such shifts in the context of forced displacement, including lack of necessary skills (Alam & Imran, 2015), as well as access to technology and the Internet and accuracy of information, which is not guaranteed. An information behavior investigation into refugee camps can produce understanding that could enable refugee camps to operate more successfully in their roles and better prepare refugee-seekers whose journeys involve that route to life in a new society. The availability of appropriate information is expected to address the shortcomings of the shift to digital technology and social media for information. In the information age, the responsibility is on information studies to find new ways to create knowledge.

8 | CONCLUSION

The understanding of information sources in the study produces knowledge that addresses the consistency, appropriateness, and reliability of information that can be received from any source and at any point on the integration journey of refugee-seekers. The applicability of information sources on the integration needs journey emphasizes the extent to which refugee integration is an informational matter. The availability of information makes it easier for the refugee-seekers to navigate complex integration processes and systems in the host society. The effectiveness of people as sources of information and places as information grounds for sharing and receiving information is enhanced. Furthermore, as refugee integration concerns the sociological and psychological effects of forced displacement (UNHCR, 2018), it is

implied that the operational information needs matrix address sociological aspects, whereas reliable information from sources deal with psychological aspects. The availability of information can have therapeutic effects because the availability of information, even in the absence of provisions, creates a balance for all—refuge-seekers can be responsible for their actions and host societies accountable for their provisions. The available information depicts “continuity” for the refugee-seeker and “consistency” for the host society. Refugee-seekers and host societies are therefore better equipped to deal with the precarious realities and complexity of integration, respectively. Ultimately, the availability of information is a step toward the host society’s integration goal and the refugee-seeker’s integration dream.

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